

Message Text

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SUBJECT: US/GDR RELATIONS

REF: BERLIN 5671

1. MUCH OF APRIL 1 DISCUSSION DEPTOFF KORNBLUM AND CHARGE HAD WITH GDR MFA AMERICAN SECTION CHIEF GEYER WAS DEVOTED TO US/GDR CULTURAL RELATIONS, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE ISSUE OF FILM RETROSPECTIVE OR FILM WEEK. MEETING WITH GEYER TOOK PLACE SHORTLY AFTER PAO ALEXANDER HAD MET WITH MFA CULTURAL DIVISION CHIEF MERKEL, WHO INFORMED PAO THAT GDR PLANNED TO GO AHEAD WITH D.W. GRIFFITH RETROSPECTIVE AND THAT US FILM WEEK WOULD HAVE TO TAKE PLACE IN 1978 NOT IN 1977.

2. GEYER, WHO TOOK INITIATIVE IN RAISING MATTER OF FILM RETROSPECTIVE/FILM WEEK, ASSERTED THAT THEY HAD ALWAYS BEEN THINKING IN TERMS OF RETROSPECTIVE, NOT FILM WEEK, AND THAT DIFFERENCE WAS THAT A RETROSPECTIVE LOOKED BACKWARD OVER THE DECADES, WHEREAS FILM WEEK WAS USUALLY DEVOTED MORE TO CURRENT FILMS. GEYER CLAIMED THAT ALEXANDER'S PREDECESSOR AND GDR OFFICIALS HAD

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PAGE 02 BERLIN 05672 041739Z

TALKED ONLY ABOUT A RETROSPECTIVE OF SILENT FILMS, AND THAT FILM WEEK WAS A US IDEA, OF RECENT ORIGIN. GEYER EXPRESSED HIS REGRETS OVER POSSIBLE BREAKDOWN IN COMMUNICATIONS ON ON ISSUE. WE EXPRESSED OUR SURPRISE AT THIS DEVELOPMENT, AT BEING PRESENTED WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI, AND NOTED CLEARLY THAT GEYER'S EXPLANATION DID NOT SQUARE WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT BOTH SIDES HAD COMMUNICATED

TO THE OTHER.

3. DURING THE DISCUSSION, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT ONE OF THE GDR'S CONCERNS, AND PERHAPS ITS MAIN ONE, ABOUT A US FILM WEEK WAS THE SELECTION OF FILMS TO BE SHOWN. GEYER NOTED THAT IT WAS GDR PRACTICE IN FILM WEEKS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES THAT BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE A VOICE IN SELECTION OF FILMS THAT WOULD BE " APPROPRIATE" TO SHOW. THE GDR OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT PERMIT PORNOGRAPHIC OR ANTI-SOVIET FILMS TO BE SHOWN. IN RESPONSE TO OUR STATEMENT THAT WE REMAIN INTERESTED IN HAVING FILM WEEK THIS YEAR, WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT GDR WOULD GO AHEAD WITH GRIFFITH RETROSPECTIVE, GEYER SAID HE WOULD TALK WITH MERKEL ABOUT A US FILM WEEK THE SECOND HALF OF 1977, BUT HELD OUT VERY LITTLE HOPE.

4. KORNBLUM AND GEYER TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF OTHER SUBJECTS IN US/GDR RELATIONS ALONG FAIRLY STANDARD LINES. RE LONG TERM VISAS FOR SERVICE ENGINEERS, GEYER, SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY, DID NOT ATTEMPT TO REBUT KORNBLUM'S EXPLANATION OF REASONS FOR WITHHOLDING VISAS, NOTING ONLY THAT THE QUESTION OF VISA ISSUANCE WAS A MATTER FOR EACH COUNTRY ITSELF TO DECIDE. GEYER APPEARED REASSURED. HOWEVER, BY KORNBLUM REMARK THAT VISA QUESTION DID NOT MEAN THAT US WAS NOT INTERESTED IN MOVING AHEAD IN US/GDR RELATIONS WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

5. THE QUESTION OF WHERE THE GDR STOOD ON RESPONDING TO OUR DRAFT ON THE CONSULAR CONVENTION WAS THE ONLY ONE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BERLIN 05672 041739Z

GEYER DUCKED. ALTHOUGH KORNBLUM ASKED SEVERAL TIMES WHEN WE MIGHT EXPECT A GDR RESPONSE GEYER HAD NO REPLY AND APPEARED TO WANT TO AVOID ANY DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER.

5. COMMENT: THE MATTER OF HOW WE MIGHT PROCEED ON FILM WEEK/RETROSPECTIVE IS SUBJECT OF SEPTEL (AND KORNBLUM WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE INTERESTED OFFICE COMPLETE RUNDOWN ON DISCUSSION WHEN RE RETURNS TO WASHINGTON). ON THE CONSULAR CONVENTION, WE SPECULATE THAT GEYER'S RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE MAY BE RELATED TO THEIR EFFORTS TO FIND LANGUAGE ALONG THE LINES GRUNERT HAS TWICE MENTIONED EARLIER (BERLIN 5092 AND BERLIN 5585), BUT THAT THEY ARE NOT FAR ENOUGH ALONG TO KNOW WHEN IT MIGHT BE READY.
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